

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
Introduction of *USA Today* Editor Ken Paulson
Finding Common Ground, February 20, 2008

Thank you, Anu.

The beloved American poet Robert Frost once said, “Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self confidence.” What that statement implies is that an important part of becoming educated is learning how to think critically – learning how to assess what you hear... to place it in an appropriate context... to hold it up to the light of logic... to compare it against other bodies of knowledge and weigh it in the balance of what you know to be true.

Finding Common Ground is a student-led initiative to help all of us sharpen the mental abilities we need for that task. And I want to express my personal appreciation to all of the students, faculty, and staff who worked together to organize this year’s Finding Common Ground.

As our name implies, Georgia Tech is a university with a technological focus, and we do not have a school of journalism. So I suspect that most people do not think of Georgia as a place that pays much attention to the media. But, as is often the case, reality is quite different than perception.

Georgia Tech is one of the nation’s leading technological universities in an age when technology has become pervasive in all areas of life. As a result, our faculty experts are increasingly appearing on news shows and in the pages of the daily paper, providing a perspective on topics that require scientific or technological expertise.

Sometimes they even weigh in on controversial issues. Judy Curry, who chairs our School of Earth and Atmospheric Science, provides expert commentary on global warming in the news and on the op ed pages. Dan Immergluck, a faculty expert in city planning, has been providing commentary on the impact of growing foreclosure rates on neighborhoods.

And even though we do not have a traditional journalism school, Georgia Tech offers academic programs in digital media. We are widely recognized as one of the best schools in the world for computer and video gaming. This distinction involves more than computing technology, although that is a component. It also involves more than competitive play, although that is a component. Where Georgia Tech is out on the leading edge is in using gaming as a tool to model and simulate complex social problems from airport security to the role of petroleum in the energy economy. It is an innovative marriage of technology and content to create a useful tool that helps us make sense of the world and explore the potential impact of decisions and actions in a complex environment.

This creative use of gaming technology by Ian Bogost and others in the Ivan Allen College and College of Computing points to the topic of this year’s “Finding Common Ground.” Today’s electronic media not only give us easy access to an incredible volume of information, but they

also enable us to be active contributors in the process of presenting information. However, most of our information comes in disjointed bits, and given the importance that we as Americans place on freedom of speech, it comes uncensored and covers the waterfront. Our challenge as individuals is to piece it together, make sense of it, and value it in an honest and responsible way. This task is essential if we are to contribute to building a better future for ourselves and our fellow creatures on planet Earth.

To help us gain a perspective on how we can interact with and value the news, the Finding Common Ground planners invited Ken Paulson to our campus. He is the editor and senior vice president for news of *USA Today* and USATODAY-dot-com.

Mr. Paulson is both a journalist and a lawyer, and over the past 30 years he has served as editor or managing editor of newspapers in five different states. He has also been executive director of the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University.

He was the host of *Speaking Freely*, a television program that aired in 60 public broadcasting markets nationwide for five seasons and was nominated for an Emmy Award. He is also the author of "Freedom Sings," a multimedia stage show celebrating the First Amendment that continues to be performed on college campuses around the nation.

Last year, Ken was named a Fellow of the Society of Professional Journalists, the top honor of the Society which is awarded in recognition of extraordinary contributions to the profession.

It is my great pleasure to present *USA Today* editor Ken Paulson to speak on the topic "Rebooting America: News for a New Generation."